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DIVINATION

BY P. J. HEATHER

THE wish to know what is going to happen is deeply rooted and widely spread among men ; so men sought in the period we are about to consider, that of Middle English Verse, for means to acquire this knowledge and paid heed to astrology, augury, omens, prophecy, lots, ordeals, dreams and visions. Their researches met with much belief in these means, though evidence of no little disbelief is found in the writings of the time and a survey of the belief and doubt expressed may help us to form a just idea of the state of men's minds in the matter at that time. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries men enjoyed good stories and writers borrowed from classical and other sources tales of gods and men, with little discrimination, except for the interest of the narrative.

The spread of Christianity though not yet ended in some parts of Europe had already worked much change by the time with which we are dealing, and the influence of the early missionaries had prepared the nations for thoughts of a higher nature. Works like *Cursor Mundi*, *The Lives of the Saints*, *Handlyng Synne*, and *The Pricke of Conscience* (the last-named edited by the Philological Society) were slowly leavening the theories of the dwellers in Europe. Side by side with these writings there existed stories such as *Chevelere Assigne*, *Amis and Amiloun*, *Beues of Hamtoun*, as well as those of the *Arthurian Cycle*, each with its individual influence. In addition, tales brought back from the Crusades and by other travellers accustomed the people to things that seemed wonderful but not perhaps unbelievable.

Deeds of violence between individuals and communities still took place but a spirit of refinement was working in the cloister and in the world and towards the end of the period works like *Pearl* and *Piers Plowman* were being produced. The friars too were at work striving against sin and want, and men like the Parson in the *Canterbury Tales* of Chaucer, helped in the uplift of the people. The attitude of *Guy of Warwick* is somewhat typical of the state of the times. Guy, towards the end of a life of a somewhat low level, was struck with remorse and turned from fighting, to go on pilgrimages. True, he would discard his pilgrim dress for the armour of a knight when his services were called for, but his help was now given more for the righteousness of the cause than to enhance his personal prowess.

ASTROLOGY

Turning to consider the means used in the middle ages to reach a knowledge of the future we find frequent references made by the writers of the period to Astrology, then called indifferently astrology or astronomy. Some of the writers were sceptical ; others accepted the study as genuine knowledge, or at least did not question its value. Two objections to acceptance as part of our folklore what was then current are that the outlook of the writers was far removed from the folk point of view ; and, secondly that the stories were largely drawn from classical or overseas sources may be met or modified by the thought that an answer to the first point is that it is probable that listeners in the fairs heard the lays of *Havelok* and *King Horn* and the ballads of *Robin Hood* ; while the retainers and servants of the large houses took their part in spreading the stories of *Rosiphelee* and those of Chaucer far beyond the halls and castles where they heard them. A reply to the second point is that minstrels are likely to have sung the same tales to the folk as the poets lifted into higher poetry in tales that were current in many countries. In many cases who can tell whether it was the poet or the reciter of doggerel verse who borrowed from the other, or whether both alike used a tale well known in their land ? The history of medicine, too, shows many instances of uplift from folk medicine to doctor's prescription and the later lowering of doctor's prescription into people's simple as the years passed on.

The comet that appeared in the days of Uther, as recorded by Laʒamon in his *Brut*, is described as having beams, two of them greater than the rest, coming from its head. One of these pointed towards Ireland and the other to France. The people were distressed—what was going to happen ? The king called for Merlin, begging him to tell what the star betokened. Merlin began by telling what had happened in England ; then he counselled the king to arm his knights and go to St. David's to meet the Irish, adding that many thousands of his foes with their leaders should be slain there ; this came to pass. The other beam, the seer went on, that which points towards France, betokens that thou shalt possess that land. Thy daughter shall bear seven sons, who shall gain many lands. Now hast thou heard what shall aid thee. March to thy fight. The story shows clearly the nature of the belief which the people of that time placed in the meaning of a comet.¹

Though Merlin was our greatest seer, others were named by Laʒamon :

¹ Laʒamon, *Brut*, Sir F. Madden, London, 1847, 17856 ff.

Teilesin spoke of one that should come, called Healing : Magan, too, was a wise clerk, who knew of the craft that is in the sky : later, Pelluz saw in the stars what would happen, and warned king Edwin beforehand through his magic.²

The *Early South English Legendary* gives an account of the physical world. The writer tells that each of the seven planets—Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon—works great wonder upon earth, of weather and of fruit : man at his birth is under their power and according to their virtue shall have diversity of life. Nevertheless, he adds that a man of good conscience may defend himself of all. Because Mars and Saturn are evil in their influence and do little good on earth, therefore men shun the beginning of a work on a Tuesday or Saturday. In connection with this fear of unlucky days, we are told in the same collection of legends that the unlucky day of Thomas Beket was Tuesday.³

Chaucer's attitude towards a belief in the influence of the stars on human destiny and conduct was twofold. In his *Treatise on the Astrolabe* he gives a description of that instrument in which the following passage occurs :

“ The first houre inequal of every Saterdag is to Saturne ; and the secounde, to Jupiter ; the 3, to Mars ; the 4, to the Sonne ; the 5, to Venus ; the 6, to Mercurius ; the 7, to the Mone ; and thanne agayn, the 8, is to Saturne ; the 9, to Jupiter ; the 10, to Mars ; the 11, to the Sonne ; the 12, to Venus ; and now is my sonne gon to reste as for that setteday.”

On the other hand Chaucer puts into the mouth of the Franklin these words :

Ire, siknesse, or constellacioun,
Wyn, wo, or chaunginge of complexioun
Causeth ful ofte to doon amis or speken.

thus seemingly not accepting the idea of an unchanging destiny fixed once for all at birth.

In another passage Chaucer deals with the twelve signs of the zodiac and tells us that :

“ everich of thise twelve signes hath respecte to a certein parcelle of the body of a man and hath it in governance ; as Aries hath thyn

² *L. B., op. cit.*, 9093 ff., 15748 ff., 24293 ff., 30491 ff.

³ *E.E.T.S.* ; Dr. C. Horstmann, *The Early South English Legendary* ; *O. S.* 87, 1887 : xlvi, 424 ff. xxvii, 909 ff. ; 1977-8.

heved, and Taurus thy nekke and thy throte, Gemini thyn armholes and thyn armes, and so forth."

The memory of this last opinion, and, possibly, any practices dependent upon it, lasted until the time of Shakespeare; for we find in *Twelfth Night* that Sir Toby Belch says: "Were we not born under Taurus?" ; to which Sir Andrew Aguecheek answers: "Taurus, that's sides and hearts." Sir Toby: "No, sir; it's legs and thighs. Let me see thee caper." The governance of Taurus in Shakespeare does not tally with that given in the *Astrolabe*, but the general idea seems to have lasted until the later date, though the details may have become confused.⁴

The general attitude of the people towards the science of astrology, as it was then held to be, may be judged by the references above; it was that there was a definite connection between the heavenly bodies and the nature of individuals; we may turn to the writings of the period to see how firmly fixed in their minds this conviction was. Chaucer's characters show frequent examples of astrological belief. In *Troilus and Criseyde* Pandarus "caste" and found the Moon favourable for his undertaking; and Criseyde bewailed her birth in a cursed constellation.⁵

The *Legend of Good Women* tells how the character of Ypermestra is attributed to Venus and Jupiter and the repression of Venus over the cruel craft of Mars, though Saturn's power made itself felt in her death.

References to the art of astrology are frequent in the *Canterbury Tales*. The Prologue tells of the "Doctour", who was grounded in "Astronomie"; the *Knights Tale* shows Arcite as a believer in horoscopes—"we must endure" what the heavens declared at our birth; and in the temple of Mars what was painted in the pictures was like that painted in the stars above. Later in the tale Saturn tells Venus of his power over drowning, prison, poisonings strangling; over the ruin of high halls, pestilence and malady. The *Miller's Tale* introduces us to the clerk and his Almageste, and to that other clerk who, prying upon the stars, fell into a marl-pit. In the *Man of Lawes Tale* it is stated that in the stars is written the death of every man, though Chaucer adds the comment, "who-so coude it rede". Later, the Emperor of Rome is blamed for not consulting the stars before arranging for his daughter's journey. The *Wife of Bath*, in the prologue to her tale, spoke of the wise astrologien Dan Ptholomee and his Almageste and described herself later as being Venerien and Marcien, and that her ascendent was Taur, and Mars therein. The chil

⁴ Chaucer, W. W. Skeat, Oxford, Clarendon P., 1913: *Astrolabe*, pt. ii, 12-25 C. T. F., 781 ff.; *Astro.*, i, 21-59 ff.; *Tw. N.*, i, 3.

⁵ *Ch. T. & C.*, ii, 73-5; iv, 744-5.

dren of Mercury and of Venus, she said, are contrary to one another in their working even as the planets themselves. The merchant in the *Marchantes Tale* cannot tell whether a particular time was fortunate by constellation or nature. The messenger in the *Squieres Tale* greeted King Cambinskan of Tartary with the words: "The King of Araby and of Inde salutes you and sends this steed. He that wrought it knew many a gin; he observed many a constellation." Aurelie in the *Frankeleyn's Tale* on his visit to Orleans, consulted a learned clerk who had a book dealing with the operations of the twenty-eight mansions of the Moon. (Chaucer interposes—"and the like folly which in our days is not worth a fly, for holy church suffers no illusion to grieve us".) Aurelie travelled to Brittany with this clerk who watched for a due time to produce the illusion that all the rocks in Brittany were removed. The clerk by his Toletane tables found the right moment for an appearance or jugglery (Chaucer excuses himself for not knowing the terms of astrology) to make it seem that the rocks had truly disappeared. (We can see that the terms and beliefs of the astrologians were so well known that Chaucer could use them as commonplaces.)⁶

From Chaucer we turn to Gower, who in the *Confessio Amantis* has given a list of the seven planets with their several properties. He deals with those born under the influence of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, in that order, and describes them as given to travel; studious; fond of joy and mirth; liberal and of good will; fierce and foolhardy; meek and patient, fortunate in trade; malicious and cruel. He also names the countries where their influence is most felt: Germany and England; Burgundy and France; Lombardy; Greece; the Holy Land; Egypt; the East.

We see that Chaucer and Gower are at one in ascribing to Saturn and Mars an evil influence in the affairs of men. Gower was in touch with much of the science of his day; the planets, the signs of the zodiac, the fifteen stars, were all treated by him in an important section of the *Confessio*. He quoted also stories from the classics to illustrate what he had to tell. Of the twelve signs of the zodiac he told that they are hot and dry, moist and cold, according to their part in the four complexions of man. Some men, too, he told were of opinion that it is constellation that causes all that a man does. In one of his illustrations he cited the constellation at the time of the birth of the Gorgons, saying that it affected

⁶ Chaucer, *op. cit.*, *L. G. W.*, 2584 ff.; *C. T. Prol.*, 411; *C. T. A.*, 1087 ff., 2036-7, 2453 ff., 3190 ff., 3460; *C. T. B.*, 190 ff., 295 ff.; *C. T. D.*, 323 ff., 609 ff., 697 ff.; *C. T. E.*, 1967 ff.; *C. T. F.*, 81 ff., 1058 ff., 1265.

the form which they assumed, that of serpents. He also mentioned the difficulty of finding out by constellation or nature what it is that women most desire. In the tale of Achilles and Deidadamia he described how Proteus, an Astronomien, sought to find out by constellation, how Troy might be taken. Gower put into the mouth of the Confessor statements, one after the lover's shrift, that it is better to wait on the tide than row against the stream, because it may hap that the lover's state and the revolution of heaven may not yet be of one accord : another, under the heading Sorcery and Witchcraft, how some seek to obtain their way to love from the stars above : while a third described the different effects on earth of different elements of creation, while, in the heaven, the stars are of sundry kind and work sundry things to us who are their underlings. Shakespeare's attitude to this view is shown by his statement that the fault is in ourselves not in our stars that we are underlings.⁷

Two versions of tales of Eastern origin which have survived, *Barlaam and Josaphat*, and the *Proces of the Seven Sages*, contain references to astrology. In the first named we are told that a king in order to know what should betide his son sent for "astronomyis" ; and the *Proces* mentions that Florentin looked at the star near the moon and said that he thought that he knew the tokening of that star.⁸

In view of the somewhat scornful attitude shown by Chaucer with regard to astrology it is worthy of note that the compiler of the *Early South English Legendary*, the writer of *Piers Plowman* and Wyclif, comment in a more tolerant way on what in their days was considered a true branch of science. The *Early South English Legendary* states that the seven planets do great wonders on earth, both in weather, and fruit, as their power allows ; also that man at his birth under their power shall have diversity of life, according to the planets' virtue. In his *Piers Plowman*, William says :

Of *quod scimus* cometh clergy : and conning of heaven :
and, in another passage :

Clergy cometh but of sight : and knowledge of stars,
As to be born or begotten : in such constellation
That wit waxes thereof : and other destiny both :

Vultus huius seculi sunt subjecti vultibus celestibus.

⁷ Gower, C. A. ; G. C. Macaulay, *John Gower*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1901 ; G. C. A., vii, 633-1506 ; i, 389 ff. ; v, 2965 ff. ; vi, 1261 ff. ; Sh. J. *Caesar*, Act 1, sc. 2.

⁸ B. and J. ; C. Horstmann-Paderborn, 1875, *Allen. Leg.*, 66 ff., P. 7 S., H. von Weber, *Anc. Met. Romances*, 1810, 360 ff.

Another acquiescence in contemporary science occurs in this book :

Divisiones graciaram sunt :

And somme to see and to seye : what sholde by-falle
Bothe of wele and of wo : and be war by-fore,
As astronomiens þorw astronomye : and philosophers wise.

We read too in the *English Works of Wyclif* :

It is known by philosophers that the haired or bearded star wanders from heaven in its motion, and betokens pestilence.

Before leaving the subject mention should be made of Nectanabus ; this celebrated magician played a great part in the life of Alexander the Great, whose doings formed a favourite theme with the writers of our period. The *Life of Alisaunder* tells how he fled to Macedonia to escape his foes in Egypt. The work mentions the apparatus which he used for reading the stars and dealing with their influence upon men. He foresaw the future and declared that he should perish by the hand of his son, a prophecy that was afterwards fulfilled. Another version of this prophecy is given in *Alisaunder of Macedoine*, and records that although Nectanabus knew that he should die by the hand of his son, he knew neither the time nor the place of his death. Even when the future was known to astrologers, their knowledge was limited. The story of Nectanabus was also told by Gower, in a long section of his *Confessio Amantis*.⁹

AUGURY

In addition to a knowledge of astrology, augury was used as a well-known means of gaining insight into the future. As occasions, however, which call for the consultation of an oracle, or the preparation of a public sacrifice, on behalf of a whole people were rare, it is natural that they were not very frequently mentioned. Two special crises at the time of the Trojan war called for observances of this sort. The *Destruction of Troy*, an alliterative poem which appeared in a translation from the Latin about Chaucer's time, describes how the Greeks sent two of their chiefs

* E.E.T.S. ; *E. S. E. L.*, C. Horstmann : E.E.T.S. ; *O. S.*, 87, 1887, xlvi, 424 ff. ; *P. P.*, W. W. Skeat, *The Vision of William concerning Piers Plowman* : E.E.T.S. ; *O. S.*, 28, 38, 54, 1867, 1869, 1873 : B, xii, 68 ; C, xv, 30-2 ; B, xix, 236-8 ; C, xxii, 242-4. *E. W. W.*, F. D. Matthew, E.E.T.S. ; *O. S.*, 74, 1880, pp. 308-10 ff. ; *L. of A.*, H. v. Weber, *Anc. Met. Rom.*, 1810, 73 ff., 133 ff., 291 ff. ; *A. of M.*, W. W. Skeat, E.E.T.S. ; *Ex S.*, i, 1867, 1045 ff. ; *G. C. A.*, *op. cit.*, vi, 1789 ff.

to consult Apollo at Delos or Delphi about sending an expedition to Troy. (As the Greeks left Greece by boat it seems that Delos was their destination.) They were told that the Greeks must sail for Troy, in answer to their offerings. At a later time in the siege of Troy, a great sacrifice was prepared for Apollo, who showed two great marvels. These were, first, it was found impossible to light the fire on the altar ; and, then, an eagle carried the entrails of the victims to the ships of the Greeks. Chaucer in his *Troilus and Criseyde* tells of the parliament held to discuss the exchange of prisoners, Antenor and Criseyde in which Calcas said that he knew by astronomy, by " sort ", and by augury, that Troy was fated to be destroyed.¹⁰

Gower records the great sacrifice prepared to ensure the success of the expedition against Gabii and how it was wasted on account of the evil omen that occurred when a serpent came from under the altar and devoured the sacrifice, Phoebus declaring that on account of the pride and wickedness of *Tarquin and his son Aruns* the offering could not be acceptable. The *Life of Alisaunder* refers to the sacrifice prepared by Philip of Macedon in order to know who should be his heir : and, later in the chronicle how Alexander made ready when he wished to consult the tree of the sun about his own death. A bishop told him to look in his own heart and he would quickly know. Alexander, consulting the oracle, saw a light like a firebrand rise from the tree and wondered whether he would return to Greece. " In Indian language," the tree said, " No." Alexander then consulted the tree of the moon, saying in his heart, " When and where shall I die ? " The tree answered, " Next year in Babylon." He went once more to the tree of the sun for more details : in anger the sun answered :

Next year ; the Twenty-fourth of March
Thou shalt be poisoned and die.

Alexander made light of the oracle, which nevertheless was fulfilled.¹¹

TOKENS AND PORTENTS

The ideas of our ancestors of six or seven hundred years ago were in many ways not much more advanced than those of the animistic period. We need not, then, wonder if their attitude towards the world as they found or understood it showed signs of the influence of animism, which

¹⁰ *D. of T.*, E.E.T.S., Panton and Donaldson, O. S. 39 and 56, 1869 and 1874. 3644 ff., 11782 ff. ; *Ch. T. and C.*, iv, 113 ff., 148 ff.

¹¹ *G. C. A.*, *op. cit.*, vii, 4701 ff. ; *L. of A.*, *op. cit.*, 6836 ff.

they had inherited from an earlier period of their history. We find, indeed, that the questions, "What will be the consequence of this happening?" "What does this event betoken?" were frequently in their minds and on their lips. The earliest use of the word omen is given in the *O.E.D.* as 1582; in texts of the fourteenth century the word *token* was frequently used to express the idea.

Some of the teachers of the middle English period were very outspoken in their condemnation of the practice of having recourse to omens; in the early half of the fourteenth century the writer of the *Azenbite of Inwyt*, Dan Michel, who translated from the French, declared that the sin of witchcraft is theirs who for money call up the devil, and make enchantments and look in the sword or in the thumb-nail to take thieves or for other things. Theirs also that make or purchase by charms or by witchcraft, or by whatever wickedness it be. Robert of Brunne, in *Handlyng Synne*, made a similar approach to superstition and warned his readers against looking in the sword or the basin, in the thumb, or in crystal—witchcraft men call it all—he added. Many believe in the pie, when she comes high or low, chattering or restless, then they say something will happen. Many a time the pie beguiles them. In another passage he warned against setting a sword or ring, "to gadyr a wrastling", it is false belief in witch-craft that makes the doing of the deed.¹²

To these witnesses against the belief in omens we can add the testimony of the parson in the *Persones Tale*. Chaucer introduces us to him in the Prologue, saying:

first he wrogte, and afterward he taughte;
and

He was a shepherde and no mercenarie.

In the tale itself we read:

But let us now go to thilke horrible swering of adjuracioun and conjuracioun, as doon thise false enchauntours or nigromanciens in bacins ful of water, or in a bright swerd, in a cercle, or in a fyr, or in a shulder-boon of a sheep. I can nat seye but that they doon cursedly and damnablely, agayns Crist and al the feith of holy chirche. What seye we of hem that bileven in divinailes, as by flight or by noyse of briddes, or of bestes, or by sort, by geomancie, by dremes, by chirkinge of dores, or crackinge of houses, by gnawynge of rattes, and swich manere wrecched-

¹² *A3. of In.*, E.E.T.S., R. Morris, *O. S.*, 23, 1866, p. 43-10 ff; *H. S.*, E.E.T.S., F. J. Furnivall, *O. S.* 119, 123: 1901-1903, 351 ff., 479 ff., 991 ff.

nesse ? Certes, al this thing is deffended by god and by al holy chirche. For which they been acursed, til they come to amendement, that on swich filthe setten hir bileve.

Chaucer adds, however, that charms for wounds, if they take any effect, or for malady of men or of beasts, may be used, if God allow.¹³

Gower, too, in his *Confessio Amantis*, included his remarks under the heading Sorcery and Witchcraft, attributing the craft to Saturn, and classifying the various forms of divination as follows: Geomancy, taking pricks in the sand; Ydromance, in water; Piromance, in fire; Aëremance, and Nigromance. Gower added that the lover traces circles (Cernes) on the ground, "bothe square and rounde" making his invocation and spares for no sin. Further, just as in his folly he seeks sorcery from the magicians, so from the naturiens he seeks his way to love from the stars above. Professor H. J. Rose in *Primitive Culture in Italy*, describing the plan of ancient towns in that country, says that they were "practically what the Romans called *Templa*—that is to say they were roughly rectangular, and had a definite orientation, the long sides running more or less north and south; . . . it is not too much to say that this simple figure . . . was the basis of the towns, the temples, and the divinatory methods of Italy in classical times."¹⁴

The writer of *Cursor Mundi* made frequent use of the word token: the punishment of Cain was in tokening of his penance; Noah's sacrifice was in tokening of the new law; Jacob's pillar was set upright in tokening; the blood on the lintel of the Israelites' doors was a token of "tau"; Samuel was forewarned of God's choice of David by tokens; the miracles of Jesus were tokens, and many other instances could be given. An example of a token specially sought for, is recorded both in the *Cursor Mundi* and in the Auchinleck text of *Joachim and Anne*, in the account of the espousal of the Virgin. All David's kin were to be called, each to bring a wand, St. Joseph among them. He whose wand showed leaf and flower should be adjudged by right to wed Mary. It was Joseph's wand which showed both leaf and flower.¹⁵

The *Early South English Legendary* too, contains examples of the acceptance of tokens. St. Francis opened the Bible, and the first text he found was that which says: If thou wilt perfect be, sell all thy goods

¹³ Ch., *op. cit.*, C. T. Prol., 479, 508; C. T. I, 603 ff.

¹⁴ G. C. A., *op. cit.*, vi, 1293 ff.; vi, 1789 ff.; H. J. Rose, *Primitive Culture in Italy*, Methuen, pp. 28-9.

¹⁵ C. Mi., E.E.T.S., R. Morris, O. S. 57, 59, 62, 66, 68; 1874-8, 1181, 2149-50, 3804, 6076, 7398, 10742, 10306, 11934 ff.; J. and A. W. B. D. D. Turnbull, *Legendæ Catholicae*, 1840, pp. 144-6.

and give to the poor and then follow me. Next he opened the book and found that the disciples should not take silver or gold on their mission. At his third opening he read : Whoso will come after me shall forsake self, bear his own cross and take his way after me. " On these three texts," said the saint, " we will found our order." In the life of St. Thomas Becket we read that the saint cast some of his bread to hounds, which forsook it. He then mixed other bread with it and had it cast to them. All that he had handled they left aside but chose and ate the other. His goodness (another text gives " cursing ") that was on him was seen that day.—Gargan shot a poisoned arrow at his bull ; the arrow turned back and smote Gargan, causing a deep wound as if in wrath. The people that were standing about went to the bishop : he was in great fear and said that it was a tokening, either of evil or of good. (It is interesting to note the bishop's doubt.) The *Legendary* gives further instances of belief in omens. St. Clement was in need of water, six miles from the nearest source ; he prayed and then saw a lamb standing, marking a spot with its right foot. The saint, taking this as an answer to his prayer, struck the place and a fair and good well sprang from it.¹⁶

In the story of St. Kenelm a white cow was seen to linger for long in the same spot ; people understood that there was some tokening in this, and it was shown to be an omen when the Pope at the Altar of St. Peter saw a white dove fly down, and lay on the altar a writ declaring that the saint's body was under a thornbush in Klent Cowbache. St. Kenelm, too, before his martyrdom told his master that through the tokening of the wand that he was carrying it was clear that he would not be done to death in that place ; the master went further and planted the wand in the ground ; in a short time it began to bear leaves and became a great ash.¹⁷

In another section of the *Legendary* omens are treated in connection with sleep and death. We are told that angels often come down to men in their sleep and show to them many a wonder, good angels of good things and the evil of bad things. The evil bode sorrow and care. Concerning the omens relating to death we read that man has two mortal souls and one immortal. At the time of a man's death the two mortal souls see whether the immortal soul goes to joy or torment ; in the former case the body is left in such " point " that the eyes are closed, the mouth of fair cheer and each limb stretched in good " point " as it were. The third soul if his fellows go to good leaves the body of fair hue—white or

¹⁶ E. S. E. L., *op. cit.*, xviii, 158 ff. ; xxvii, 1957 ff. ; xlv, 19 ff. ; xlvii, 475 ff.

¹⁷ E. S. E. L., *op. cit.*, xlix, 215 ff. ; 160 ff.

red. When their fellows are seen to be brought into torment, they make ill-semblant and leave the body of foul hue, the eyes staring, and the mouth foul and often grinning. Such signs are often seen and show that the soul is in evil way. (If memory serves me truly a similar belief has been recorded from East Anglia within the last century.)¹⁸

If we turn to the chronicles and romances we meet the same spirit of belief in omens. Lazamon's *Brut* tells how an eagle spoke and thus betokened the death of King Ruhhudibras. It tells later that Merlin warned Vortiger that he was unwise to ask about the dragons and what their fight betokened, but said that they betokened the fighting of kings to come. In this chronicle again we read that Cadwalader prayed that God would send him a token, and then dreamed that he was to go to Rome; he was afraid, but went nevertheless.¹⁹

In *Hauelok the Dane* the token of kingship plays a great part in the story. Grim had been charged to drown Hauelok, but when his wife saw a bright light, like a sunbeam, shining from his mouth, she called her husband; they found on the shoulder of the child a "kyne-mark", or token of royalty, and Grim thus recognized him as his future king and saved his life. Instead of drowning Hauelok, Grim offered him his service. When Hauelok grew up, he married Goldborough, and she at night saw a wonderful light as bright as daylight coming from his mouth and a red cross on his shoulder. She heard an angel voice: "Goldborough, leave thy sorrow, Hauelok is king's son and king's heir, as is betokened by the cross. He shall be king of England and Denmark, and thou shalt be queen." Hauelok afterwards went to Denmark, and was there invited to a feast by a Danish Earl, Ubbe; when he and Goldborough were sleeping at the Castle, Ubbe saw a great light about midnight and found that it came from Hauelok's mouth. Knights and sergeants were called to witness the fact. They saw, further, the bright cross upon his back, the token of kingship. So they knew that he was Birkabeyn's son, and the tale goes on to say that Hauelok became king of Denmark, and then was crowned king of England, thus fulfilling his dream of kingship. The *Early South English Legendary* provides a further example of light being considered an omen of worthiness, in the life of St. Gregory. The people were praying night and day that God would send some token, if any man was worthy to be Pope in Rome. They saw a great pillar of light reaching to heaven, in a corner of a chapel. When they came to the place, they found under the light St. Gregory fallen to the ground. The *Destruction*

¹⁸ E. S. E. L., *op. cit.*, xlv, 223; xlv, 786 ff.

¹⁹ L. B., *op. cit.*, 2824 ff., 16006 ff., 32051.

of *Troy* gives an account of the flight into Egypt. When Herod the king took counsel to slay Christ, and the angel appeared to Joseph, bidding him to take the child and his mother to Egypt, the false gods on their arrival there fell to the ground. That was a token that sacrifice to many gods should cease. In another part of this story it is recorded that at the time of the treachery of Æneas and Antenor, the kings were in council, and there was heard a horrible noise, like the clamour of a people; no one could tell what it signified. The council was broken off, and later Æneas and Antenor treated with the Greeks; the Trojans held a sacrifice to Apollo, whom it pleased to show two marvels. The first was, that try as they would, it was found impossible to light the fire for the sacrifice. Ten times they tried, ten times they failed. The second marvel happened when the beasts were killed and the entrails laid on the altar; an eagle swooped down and bore them away to the ships of the Greeks. The Trojans marvelled and stood staring. Cassandra told that Apollo was angered because his temple was spattered with blood when Achilles was slain. About the second marvel, she said: "The town is betrayed by Trojan treachery." Calcas, the cursed, that took counsel with the Greeks, said: "Yonder town will be taken in a short time." The same poem describes the consultation which Ulysses had in Circe's island with an oracle. Ulysses himself knew somewhat of wiles and witchcraft, but was to find that for men the science had its limitations; he asked specially what was to be the fate of our souls after death. "To all things," said Ulysses, "he answered full ably, but of our souls forsooth he told me nothing."²⁰

Two tales from Gower illustrate the large part that omens occupied in the thought of the people. Zoroaster was the first who explored the magic art and at his birth laughed: this, Gower tells us, was a token of woe to follow. Again, Corvus, the false bird, in *Phoebus and Cornide* betrayed his mistress. Phoebus in anger turned the bird from being whiter than any swan to black; and, added Gower, men may to this day take evidence that when the raven cries it signifies some mishap. In the *Manciples Tale* Chaucer expressly stated that when the bird cried in tempest and rain it should be "In tokeninge that thurgh thee my wyf is slain," in his version of the same story. In the *Miller's Tale* Absolon thought that as his mouth had itched all day that was a sign of kissing. The *Proces of the Seven Sages*, which derives from eastern sources, introduces Merlin as a representative wise man, and quotes him as saying of seven cauldrons,

²⁰ *H. the Dane*, W. W. Skeat, E.E.T.S., *Ex S.*, iv, 1868, 585 ff., 1247 ff., 2086 ff.; *E. S. E. L.*, *op. cit.*, li, 61 ff.; *D. of T.*, *op. cit.*, 4304 ff., 11623 ff., 13258 ff.

that they "Betoken the seven wise men, that have established new customs." ²¹

A voice may be taken as a token, as in the life of *St. Alexius*; a voice came clear; the people prayed for a token; the voice came again to the bishop. ²²

Cursor Mundi tells of Moses in the wilderness that three times he found after sleeping three wands and he understood that there was a token given him; and in the same work the vision of the burning bush is taken as a token.

In the *Life of Alisaunder* we read of the portents that occurred at Alexander's birth, the shaking of the earth and the turning of the sea to green; the sun grew dark and the moon black; peals of thunder were heard and the day was dark as night. In *Alisaunder of Macedoine* there is an account of a bird laying an egg in Philip's lap. He sat still and the egg fell to the ground and the shell broke. From it went out an adder, which went round about and would have entered the shell again, but died outside it. The magicians said that this betokened Alexander's conquests and his death before he returned to Greece. Gower too records the portents. A further story in the *Life of Alisaunder* tells of a folk that rise early and go to the sea; there they stand on the edge all day on one foot; by observing the waves and the stars they judge the issue of all wars and can by this means keep their land from all strife. The mention of the waves as an omen-bearing sign makes an interesting addition to the lore of astrology. ²³ Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde* wrote of the owl Ascaptilo shrieking after Troilus for two nights and how Troilus took this for an omen that he should die. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* mentions that Ascaptilus was turned into an owl, a foul bird, messenger of woe to come, a dastardly owl, a fearful omen to mortals. There is also much in the *Knights Tale* about signs and omens. Palamon, Emelye and Arcite on one day went to the temples of Venus, Diana and Mars, respectively, to offer their sacrifices. At the end of Palamon's sacrifice he was encouraged by the shaking of the statue which he took as a sign that his prayer for victory over Arcite was accepted. Emelye was sore aghast when she visited the temple of Diana, because she saw that one of the two fires there was first extinguished and then revived, on which the other fire was quenched, making a whistling sound while drops of blood ran from

²¹ G. C. A, *op. cit.*, vi, 2367 ff.; iii, 783 ff.; C. T. H, *op. cit.*, 105 ff.; C. T. A, 3681 ff.; P. of 7 S., *op. cit.*, 2458 ff.

²² *St. Alexius*, E.E.T.S., O. S. 69. F. J. Furnivall, 1878, 819 ff.

²³ C. Mi., *op. cit.*, 6238 ff., 5745 ff. L. of A., *op. cit.*, 637 ff. A. of M., *op. cit.*, 999 ff. G. C. A, *op. cit.*, vi, 2222 ff. L. of A., *op. cit.*, 5015 ff.

the ends of the brands on the altar. The arrows in the quiver of the goddess also clattered and she knew not the meaning of the signs. Arcite, too, was disturbed, when after finishing his prayer, the rings and doors of the temple rattled, the fires burned bright on the altar, and the ground gave forth a sweet smell. But after more incense had been cast on the altar, with other rites, the hauberk of Mars' statue began to ring and Arcite heard murmured the word "Victory".²⁴

Two more tales from Gower tell of omens accepted. In *Apollonius of Tyre*, while Apollonius was waiting with his ship at anchor on account of an unfavourable wind, the wind turned to a better point; he then knew that the god wished him to change his course and went to Ephesus instead of to Tarsus as he had intended. The second is that of *Demetrius and Perseus*. The Roman general Emilius, on leaving Rome for the war against Perseus, found his daughter crying for the death of her little hound, Perse. That death, he said, is a presage of misfortune for our enemies.²⁵

Belief in omens is inherent in the human mind; it can be seen from the instances we have been considering that through wide knowledge of the subject, from Bible story, the lives of saints, from foreign sources, from chronicles and legendary tradition, the folk of the period were well furnished with examples to strengthen that belief and to add more evidence for continuing the confidence they already had.

PROPHECY

Another accepted means of learning what the future has in store for us is prophecy, and in this matter Lazamon's *Brut* helps us in our search, for his chronicle tells of many forecasts of things to come. Diana revealed with tokens and dreams what kings should afterwards reign. She showed too to Brutus, in a dream, how he was to go to Albion, a fair land with giants in it and build a new Troy. Then we have the tale of the eagle which spoke beforehand of the death of king Ruhhudibras; this incident is also mentioned in the *Chronicle of England*. Later, Teilesin in the time of king Kinbelin told the king of the child that should be called Healing and bring Adam and others out of hell, a legend which may be very old. But the most famous of our native seers is Merlin who represents a pagan tradition, as we remember his power of disappearing at will. The story of his prophecies is closely linked with that of Arthur, the Christian king, who retains nonetheless many of the ideas of the magic stage of religion.

²⁴ *L. of A.*, *op. cit.*, 637 ff.; *A. of M.*, *op. cit.*, 999 ff.; *L. of A.*, 5011 ff., 4876-7; *Ch.*, *op. cit.*, *T. and C.*, v, 316 ff.; *Ov. Mett.*, v, 549-50; *C. T. A.*, *op. cit.*, 2261 ff.

²⁵ *G. C. A.*, *op. cit.*, viii, 1777 ff.; ii, 1773 ff.

Before the coming of Aurelie, Vortiger, deceived by Saxon treachery, fled into Wales and decided to build there a castle. Merlin was sent for and found. Joram demanded that Merlin's blood should be sprinkled on the foundations, because what was built each day fell at night. But Merlin explained the true reason—that two dragons fought each night beneath the foundations: when digging was carried out, Merlin was found to be right and Joram executed. Merlin then went to Ireland to bring thence the stones that were afterwards set up at Stonehenge. Other noted prophecies of Merlin are: that in which he said to Vortiger: Aurelie and Uther are coming to thy destruction, flee, but they will pursue. Again, he told beforehand of Ygerne and Arthur; then before Arthur's birth, of his power and of his death and return. He prophesied too that the walls of Rome should fall before Arthur: of Winchester, "Wretched art thou, Winchester, the earth shall swallow thee." Arthur declared, that as Merlin once said, he should go to Avalon, be healed and return. Of Merlin's exposition of the tokening of the comet mention has already been made.²⁶

Merlin's preparation for revelation of the future is thus described: Merlin sat still for a long time as if he would slumber. They that saw him with their own eyes saw that oft he turned as if he were a serpent. Late he gan to wake; then began he to quake and Merlin the prophet said this word . . . This description reminds us of a Shaman's preparation.²⁷ Two references to the Sibyl may be given; the first is that the Sibyl said that three kings should go from Britain to win Rome: Belin, Constantin and Arthur: we find the second in the account of Cadwalader's dream; Merlin the prophet foretold the time when Cadwalader's bones should be taken to Britain; then bliss shall be rife in Britain, and fruit and weather be prosperous. Then Cadwalader awoke and said later that Merlin spoke of his death, and Sibyl the wise set it in a book that he should fulfil God's will.

One of the Sibyls is here mentioned: *Cursor Mundi* refers to six:

the first,	of Persia;
second,	of Libya;
third,	of Delphi;
fourth,	of Babylon;
fifth,	the Queen of Sheba;
sixth,	of Samos.

²⁶ *L. B., op. cit.*, 1221 ff., 2824 ff.; *Chr. of Eng.*, J. Ritson, 156; *L. B., op. cit.*, 15472 ff., 19252 ff., 23027 ff., 28450 ff., 28610 ff., 9127 ff., 18192 ff., 18836 ff., 27106 ff., 27979 ff.

²⁷ *L. B., op. cit.*, 17906 ff.

This poem also tells of the appearances to Joachim and Anne, foretelling the birth of a son to the latter; of the prophet of estrinland, named Balaam; of the star that guided the wise men to Bethlehem, and of the journey into Egypt, when the beasts hurt neither ox nor ass; then was fulfilled the prophecy of "Jeremi."²⁸ The legend of the Holy Cross is also found in the *Cursor Mundi*; it tells of the three seeds given to Seth; how they grew to a tree, on which a lady sat and prophesied that upon that tree should hang the Lord of Health. The story is continued to the time of Helena.²⁹

Other references to prophecy there are: in *Joachim and Anne*, the birth of the Baptist is foretold. Merlin's fame continued, and in the Songs of King Edward's Wars, in T. Wright's *Political Poems and Songs* we read how Merlin said that out of the north into the south should come a bear to make those of France wroth, bringing bale to all those there. Two sayings of Merlin are recorded in *Of Arthour and of Merlin*: of a parson he said that he would flee to a bridge, fall into the water and so be killed; this came to pass. Merlin, later, prophesied of strong battle to come.³⁰

The *Early South English Legendary* records two prophetic utterances in the lives of Saints Bartholomew and Thomas; in the former the devil foretells the future; in the latter, St. Thomas prophesied the death of the butler who had struck him.³¹

Handlyng Synne, too, is a storehouse of tales, some dealing with prophecy. In that of the false executor, the dead man said: "You shall live here no longer than two years." He told what day he should die, and went forth. The prophecy was fulfilled. In a similar case, the Proud Lady said: "You shall die, my lord and thou." Right at the term, as she said, the knight and the squire died. Another case is that of the Minstrel, killed after disturbing a bishop. The minstrel played his melody with great noise, and the bishop was not able to say grace. The bishop said: "Give him his charity, and let him go; his death is nigh." As he left the minstrel was killed by the fall of a stone. The same work tells of the Carollers, who continued their carols in the churchyard in spite of the priest's protest. He then prayed that they should continue their carolling for a twelvemonth; at the twelvemonth's end they separated and fell as if dead or in a swoon. Then they rose and told the

²⁸ *L. B.*, *op. cit.*, 32107 ff.; *C. Mi.*, 6999-9184, 11380 ff., 11608 ff.

²⁹ *C. Mi.*, 211, 21800.

³⁰ *J. and A. (Auch.)*, Abbotsford Club, p. 159-1 ff.; *P. P. and S. Chron. and Mem.*, pp. 75-1 ff.; *Of. A and of M.*, Abbotsford Club, 1158 ff., 3052.

³¹ E.E.T.S.; *E. S. E. L.*, C. Horstmann, *O. S.* 87, 1887: lv, 11 ff., lvi, 91 ff.

priest that he would go to his long home. Both the prayer and the prophecy were fulfilled.³²

The *Parlement of the Thre Ages* has a passage on the subject describing how Virgil made images of bright brass to speak and to tell what had happened and what would happen. Also Gower in the *Confessio Amantis*, wrote of Theges being the first augur of all, in the section dealing with Discoverers and Inventors. In other passages he told how Cassandra foretold sorrow and pain arising from the arrival at Troy of Paris and Helen. He told too, how Jupiter gave Tiresias the gift of prophecy to make amends for his being struck blind by Juno for having given judgment against her. Of Thetis he wrote that she dreaded what was said in prophecy of her son Achilles and his future death at Troy. Gower, however, accused Apollo of falsehood in that he feigned to read events that should afterwards happen.³³

A reference occurs in *Piers Plowman* to the power of lunatics to foresee the future :

... but many times it happens to them
To prophesy of the people : in play as it were.

The *Destruction of Troy* gives examples of prophecy ; thus Protheus, son of Eusebius, declared that his father was a philosopher who prophesied that if Paris visited Greece and won a wife, Troy would be overthrown and burnt. Cassandra warned Hecuba of the destruction of Troy, and foretold later that Agamemnon would be slain. She interpreted too the omens that took place at the sacrifice that she had recommended, in a sense unfavourable to the Trojans : when Calcas heard of these omens, he said that the town would be taken in a short time. Then the Trojan horse was built.³⁴

The following passages show what vagueness of language was used in the prophecies of the Middle Ages ; from *Winner and Waster* :

When waves shall wax wild and walls be down
And hares upon hearth stones shall crouch in their form
And when boyes of no blood, with boast and with pride,
Shall wed ladies in land, and lead them at will
Then dreadful Doomsday draweth nigh after.

³² *H. S.*, *op. cit.*, 2323 ff., 3272 ff., 4701 ff., 8987 ff.

³³ *Parl. of 3 Ages, Select Early English Poems*, Prof. I. Gollancz, O.U.P., London, 1915, 594 ff. ; *G. C. A.*, *op. cit.*, iv, 2403-4 ; v, 7441 ff. ; iii, 746 ff. ; v, 2961 ff. ; v, 927 ff.

³⁴ *P. P.*, *op. cit.*, C, x, 113-4 ; *D. of T.*, *op. cit.*, 2637 ff., 2685 ff., 11782 ff., 12431 ff.

From *Piers Plowman* :

That Reason shall reign : and Govern realms
Mede shall no more be master on earth

followed in the C Text by :

But ere this fortune befall ; one shall find the worst
By sex sonnes and a ship : and half a shef of arrows,
And the middle of a moon : shall make the Jews turn.

From the same work :

Ere (five) years be fulfilled : such famine shall arise,
Through floods and through foul weather : fruits shall fail,
And so said saturne : and sent you to warn :
When ye see the sun amis : and two monks' heads,
And a Mayde have the maistry : and multiply by eight,
Then shall death withdraw : and dearth be justice,
And dawe the dyker : die for hunger,
But if god of his goodness : grant us a truce.

And then shall the abbot of Abyndoun : and all his issue for ever
Have a knock of a king : and incurable the wound.
That this be true seek ye : that over-see the bible.

William does not leave the subject without a word of regret :

(Wederwise) shupmen now · and oþer witty people
Han no by-leyue to þe lyft · ne to þe lood-sterre ;
Astronomiens al day · in here art faillen,
That whilom warned men by-fore · what shoulde by-falle after.
Shupmen and shephurdes · by the seuen sterres
Wisten while and tolden · whenne hit shoulde reynen.
Tyliers þat tyleden þe erthe · tolden here maystres
By þe seed þat þei sewe · what þei shoulde notye,
And what lyue by and leue · þe londe was so trewe.
Now failleþ þis folke · boþe sowers and shupmen,
Noþer þei knoweþ ne conneþ · o cours by a-noþer.
Astronomyens al-so · aren at here wittes end ;
Of þat was calculed of þe clymat · the contrarye þey fyndeth.

The golden age of astrology was ended, for tillers of the earth and shipmen.³⁵

³⁵ *W. and W., Sel. E. E. Poems*, 1920, Sir I. Gollancz, O.U.P., 13 ff. ; *P. P. A.*, iii, 266 ff. ; *B.*, iii, 283 ff. ; *C.*, iv, 440 ff. ; *A.*, vii, 306 ff. ; *B.*, vi, 322 ff. ; *C.*, ix, 322 ff. ; *B.*, x, 326 ff. ; *C.*, vi, 169 ff. ; *C.*, xviii, 94-106. (B text is similar.)

Lots

The method of divination by means of casting lots is worthy of some notice. This means was known variously as drawing or casting lots : laying lots : casting cavel : finding by sort : drawing cut. *Cursor Mundi* gives examples : casting lots for Christ's garment ; it tells of the cavel for the choice of the twelfth apostle that fell on Matthias. We read in *Patience* how Jonah was chosen by lot and thrown overboard. This last act of divination is also recorded in *Alexius*.³⁶

Lazamon in the *Brut* tells how Ascanius sent after those who knew the magic incantations and cast lots (Lazamon describes the means as evil crafts) when he wished to know the future. Further, when Vortiger was troubled about the walls of the castle he was building at Reir-Kayr in Wales, which fell each night after the work of the day, the king sent for sages that knew wisdom and bade them cast lots and use incantations to find why this happened. The contest between Merlin and Joram has been already described.³⁷

In the same chronicle an example of the use of lots is given in a speech attributed to Hengest who told how the people in his country were summoned at intervals to determine who was to emigrate. Every sixth man according to the lots was to go forth to some land beyond his own.

For the purposes of tribute in the case of Athens and Crete, lots were drawn to settle who of the Athenian youths were to be sent to Crete to be sacrificed to the Minotaur. On the occasion on which Theseus was thus chosen, Ariadne by her arts befriended him to such an extent that the Minotaur was destroyed.³⁸

Other instances of the drawing of lots which may be mentioned occur in *Handlyng Synne* in which an abbot was chosen by lot ; in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Calkas affirms that he is speaking truth, for Appollo has told him, and he has found out by astronomy, by lot and by augury. In the *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales* also Chaucer tells how, to decide who should begin the series of tales the pilgrims were to draw cut and he who had the shortest should begin ; this was accordingly done. The three rioters in the *Pardoner's Tale* agreed that lots should be cast to see where the cut would fall.³⁹

(to be continued)

³⁶ *C. Mi.*, *op. cit.*, 16699 ff., 21157 ff., 18907 ; *Pat.*, *op. cit.*, 193 ff. ; *St. A.*, *op. cit.*, 607 ff.

³⁷ *L. B.*, *op. cit.*, 270 ff., 13853 ff. ; *Folk-Lore*, xlviii, 386 ff.

³⁸ *L. B.*, *op. cit.*, 13853 ff. ; *G. C. A.*, *op. cit.*, v, 5283 ff.

³⁹ *H. S.*, *op. cit.*, 4004 ff. ; *Ch.*, *op. cit.*, *T. and C.*, iv, 113 ff. ; *C. T. Prol.*, 835 ff. *C. T. C.*, 793 ff.



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DIVINATION

BY P. J. HEATHER

(*Conclusion*)

THE ORDEAL

A particular form of divination was well known in the middle ages ; that of subjecting persons accused or thought guilty of crimes to trial by ordeal. Stories of this custom, with many variations of detail were current and recorded in middle English. Among the examples in which the idea of ordeal is presented is one which tells of a hero's performance of some feat, marking him as a leader. The story of Alexander and Bucephalus, given in the *Life of Alisaunder* is an instance. We read that Philip was afraid of the horse, while Alexander on holding out his hand was welcomed by having his hand licked and by Bucephalus falling to the ground in obeisance. Alexander unbound the horse and, leaping on his back rode him with ease. So Alexander was crowned king. The horse was a fierce beast ; its fodder was wheat, but it preferred men's flesh. A further exploit, in which Darius and others had failed, is attributed to Alexander. There was a spear fixed in the ground, casting no shadow : he who drew it out should win the world. Alexander, laughing, drew it out at his first attempt.⁴⁰

Our own hero, Arthur, is credited with a similar feat ; in his case the sword Excalibur, fixed fast in a stone, corresponds to Alexander's spear. The English knights were assembled at Christmas and Bishop Brice said : " Who draws it out shall be king." The knights made trial and failed ; the sword and stone stood till Candlemas, Easter and Pentecost. Then Arthur drew it out and replaced it.

The *Early South English Legendary* tells how St. Wolston took his crosier and with it struck the marble tomb of St. Edward. The staff went into the stone as if into soft sand. St. Wolston went away—no man could draw out the staff. The king and archbishop sent and begged the saint—as all had failed—to continue as bishop of Worcester, and after much persuasion, Wolston consented.⁴¹

The tale of Florent, told by Gower in the *Confessio Amantis*, provides a good instance of the ordeal by means of a riddle, which must be solved, if punishment is to be avoided. Florent, nephew of the Emperor, sought

⁴⁰ *L. of A., op. cit.*, 766 ff., 1194 ff., 2625 ff.

⁴¹ *Of A. and of M.*, 2793 ff. ; *E. S. E. L., op. cit.*, xx, 139 ff.

adventures and in one of his journeys slew the son and heir of the lord of a castle. He was taken prisoner ; but after deliveration of the offended family, was granted a respite of a year and a day, on condition that he should return and answer this question : " What do women most desire ? " Florent swore to undertake the ordeal and to return.

On his return at the time appointed, he met in a forest a most uncomely woman, who promised to give the answer and said : " What shall I have if I contrive to save thy life ? " " Anything you ask." " I wish that you become my husband." Florent finally agreed. " Say then that what women would lievest have is to be sovereign of man's love."

At the castle this answer was accepted. Florent wedded the hag, and in the night she was transformed into a beautiful woman, presenting Florent with a dilemma. Would he have her beautiful in the night or in the day ? On consideration, Florent decided to leave the choice to her. She then gave him thanks for freeing her from her destiny. Night and day she would remain beautiful ; her step-mother had forshapen her and she was to remain ugly until a knight of passing good name consented to marry her.⁴³

Another instance, also from Gower's *Confessio* illustrates the diversity of detail already mentioned.

The Tale of the Three Questions

A king, young and wise, was in the habit of asking hard questions, which none of his courtiers could answer, save one knight. The king set his wit to devise some questions which he thought unanswerable, in order to put this knight to confusion. He found three and put them to the knight. Should he fail to solve them, the penalty was to be death and the confiscation of his goods.

The three questions were :

What needs help least, but is given most help by men ?

What is worth most, but is least in expense ?

What costs most, but is worth least ?

The knight, as the day appointed for the answers drew near, was in grievous trouble for his own sake, and for his wife and three children. But the youngest, a daughter of fourteen years, begged her father to let her appear before the king and reply to the questions. This she duly did and made answer :

⁴³ G. C. A., *op. cit.*, i, 1407 ff.

To the first : Earth needs least, for all turns to earth and men labour most in helping it.

To the second : Humility, as shown in the Son sent to redeem the world.

To the third : Pride, by which Lucifer lost heaven and fell to hell ; and Adam lost Paradise.

The king was much struck by the wisdom of her answers, and found in her so much beauty, that he said that had her father been a Peer, the daughter should have become his wife, and promised to increase her state. What worldly gift would she have ? " Thanks, my liege," she answered kneeling, " my father hath but little property, but by your noble grace that may be mended." An earldom had just fallen into the king's hand by escheat : the king awarded this to the knight with rent and land and delivered the gift with a charter. " Now I am an Earl's daughter," said the maid. The king gave his assent and she became his wife.⁴³

The story of *Apollonius of Tyre*, told by Gower and used by Shakespeare in his *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, also has as an incident a riddle.⁴⁴

The tale of *Gawayne and the Grene Knight* has a connection with ordeals, though the setting is widely different from most other examples. This tale tells not of an ordeal by combat ; the Green Knight in fact bore a holly branch in token of peace ; he craved a Christmas game and not a fight. Neither of the two actors had any wrong to redress. Gawayne undertook an adventure, not the righting of an injury, nor the ending of a feud. Nevertheless, having sought the adventure, and having been accepted as a champion, Gawayne underwent a very real ordeal ; the point at issue was the reputation for prowess of Arthur's court ; and this Gawayne effectually sustained, for before the two chief actors parted, the Green Knight said to Gawayne : " I hold thee as pure as if thou hadst never forfeited."⁴⁵

Short references to ordeals in other cases deserve a mention. *Cursor Mundi* records a notable test which was applied when the children of Israel set up the golden calf. All the Israelites were bidden to drink a specially prepared draught of water and all who were guilty of sin in the setting up of the calf had their beards over-gilded by the drink. Again Ysoude in *Sir Tristrem* undertook to bear hot iron to establish her innocence.⁴⁶

⁴³ G. C. A., *op. cit.*, i, 3067 ff. (Note in E.E.T.S. by G. C. Macaulay : The tale of the three questions is one of which I cannot trace the origin. . . . A reference to the second and third questions occurs in *Mirour de l'homme*, 12601 ff.)

⁴⁴ G. C. A., *op. cit.*, viii, 271 ff.

⁴⁵ G. and G. K., E.E.T.S., 136 ff., 206, 339 ff., 2393-4.

⁴⁶ C. Mi., 6617 ff. ; Sir. T., S. T. S., 1506, 2225 ff.

Guy of Warwick was accused of lying against Otus who declared that he would soon prove it on Guy by the ordeal of combat. Guy in Egypt overcame the giant Amoraunt ; on the continent he fought successfully on behalf of his sworn-brother Tirrii ; in Northumberland he destroyed the dragon ; and, later at the request of Athelston, he slew Colbrond, the Danish champion.⁴⁷

Beues of Hamtoun took on himself the fight with the dragon of Cologne, and gained thereby a reputation only equalled by Sir Lancelot, Wade and Guy of Warwick.⁴⁸

Roland in the story of *Otuel*, offered to fight with that giant, to know whether Christ or Mahoun was more of might. Battles of a similar nature are also recorded in *Roland and Vernagu* and in *Sir Ferumbras*.⁴⁹

The idea of taboo runs through the whole story of *Sire Degarre*. Degarre's mother confided him to a hermit, handing him a pair of gloves which her lover had sent her from fairy-land ; they would fit no hand, of man, woman or child, but hers. In a letter she asked that when the child was ten years old, he should be given the gloves, with a ban on his marrying any woman whom the gloves would not fit, for assuredly they would not go on any hand, save on his mother's who bare him. When Degarre was twenty years of age, the hermit sent him forth with the gloves. Degarre set out and came to the castle of an Earl who offered him land and his daughter in marriage. Degarre answered : " Let all women come before me first : if the gloves fit then I will take thy land. The test failed ; and Degarre went on his journey to the palace of the King. The King, too, offered Degarre marriage with his daughter ; he would not accept, unless the gloves fitted. The princess recognized the gloves, and mother and son were thus reunited, but not in marriage."⁵⁰

Two important instances of ordeals remain to be dealt with. They are those told in the tales of *Athelston* and of *Amis and Amilon*.

Each of these romances tells of sworn-brothers. In *Athelston* we have the story of four men who met abroad, travelling to England. Before arriving in this country they swore an oath of brotherhood. Shortly after their coming here the king of England died and Athelston, who was related to him, became king. He called for his brethren and rewarded them. He made Wymound Earl of Dover ; then Egelond was made Earl of Stane, and to him Athelston gave his sister Edyff to wife. Alryke,

⁴⁷ *G. of W.*, E.E.T.S., E. S. xlii, xlix, lix, 2019 : 62-1 ff., 162 ff., 255-1 ff.

⁴⁸ *B. of H.*, E.E.T.S., A, 2621 ff., 2597 ff.

⁴⁹ *O.*, E.E.T.S., 1265 ff. ; *R. and V.*, E.E.T.S., 173 ff. ; *Sir F.*, E.E.T.S., 756 ff., 1045 ff.

⁵⁰ *Sire D.*, Abbotsford Club, 192 ff., 396 ff., 637 ff.

the remaining wed-brother was a clerk ; and as the see of Canterbury was vacant, the king gave the archbishopric to him. Egelond was a true man ; he had two sons by his wife, fifteen and thirteen years old. He was loved by the king, as was his wife, and they were called often to his counsel. On this, Wymound, of Dover, became envious and devised evil against them. He journeyed to London, and privately warned Athelston that Egelond was a traitor, and would poison Athelston. The king believed Wymound and summoned Egelond and his wife and sons, to appear before him in London. The summons promised knighthood for the sons ; but when the party reached Westminster, all were imprisoned and the king refused to heed the intercession of his queen on their behalf. (Athelston kicked his queen.) The queen, however, sent a message to the archbishop at Canterbury, who rode at once to London, and met the king at Westminster. He failed to persuade the king to change his mind, and was ordered to leave the land, laying down his cross, staff, mitre and ring. The archbishop threatened an interdiction on the land, and on leaving the king was met by a knight, who promised to support the archbishop, and rise in rebellion against the king. Then two knights came from the king, who begged to be absolved ; the archbishop absolved the king and the land. Then he gave judgment that all the five persons accused should undergo trial by the ordeal of fire, confident that if they were innocent, they would be unharmed. A great fire was made and the archbishop announced that if they were guiltless they would not need to fear the ordeal. First, Egelond passed the test " vnblemshyd ", and was followed by his sons, equally unharmed. The Countess, who was great with child, was also found innocent. But the child that was born was accepted by Athelston in a spirit of real repentance as his heir and was christened Edemound. The king afterwards declared that he had sworn by St. Anne that he would not disclose the name of the traitor ; but was told by the archbishop that he could absolve him from keeping his oath. On this, Athelston, " vnblyue ", gave Wymound's name. Wymound was sent for, with a false promise of a boon to follow. Wymound came to London ; the king said : " Let him to the fire go, to prove the truth." Wymound fell in the fire, but was dragged out by the Earl's children, and then confessed that it was for envy that he had maligned Egelond. He was drawn, tied, by five horses through the streets to the Elms, and there hanged " ful hyze " as a traitor.⁵¹

The second account of Ordeal, this time by battle, is contained in *Amis and Amiloun*, and has reference to the period when in this land the

⁵¹ *Athelston*, edited by A. McI. Trounce, Ox. Univ. Press, 1933, 561 ff.

Norman form of ordeal had superseded the earlier form of ordeal by fire. In this romance we are told how Amis, rightfully accused of transgressing his fealty to his lord, nevertheless protested his innocence and claimed to fight in proof of it. Here too the sworn-brother played his part in the story ; for Amis later reflected that he would be called upon to swear to his innocence, and appealed to his sworn-brother Amiloun to undertake the combat for him. The two were so much alike that it was impossible to distinguish, except by their clothes, one from the other. So they changed clothes, and Amiloun, who had consented to fight in place of Amis, duly appeared and slew the accuser ; his victory was accepted as proof of Amis' innocence. Amiloun was stricken with leprosy as a punishment for fighting in an unrighteous cause and was a leper for three years ; and the miscarriage of justice was only expiated by a miracle.⁵²

DREAMS AND VISIONS

We have seen that the problems concerning belief in astrology were much in the minds of the people in the fourteenth century ; but a matter which was even more discussed was the attitude that should be adopted towards dreams ; should they be heeded or neglected ? In the opening lines of the *Hous of Fame* Chaucer, after his appeal for a good issue to every dream, says that it is strange what causes dreams, and asks why the effect follows in some cases but is wanting in others ? Why is one dream a vision and another a revelation ? He declares that he knows not why one is a phantom, another an oracle. If others know better than he, let them divine ; he will never toil to know of their significance. The distances of time before their fulfilment : the difference of their causes : the dreamers' temperaments : or as others say, weakness of brain, abstinence, sickness, prison, the breaking of rules, habit of life, curiosity, melancholy, dread or devotion : are these some of the causes ? Have spirits the power to make folk dream ? Or does the soul foresee the future and warn everyone by visions or types while our flesh has not the power to understand aright, because it is warned too darkly ? Such were some of the problems ; but, adds Chaucer, I will not give my opinion ; may the Holy Rood turn for us every dream to good. What Chaucer was telling in these lines, people in other lands were pondering too. The author of the *Romaunt of the Rose* wrote in French and the translator of the first part says that many say that there is nothing but fables and lies in dreams, while men may see that some are scarcely false ; and refers to Macrobius and his explanation of the dream of " king Cipiou ". He de-

⁵² *A. and A.*, H. v. Weber, *Anc. Met. Rom.*, 1810, 839 ff.

clares that, let any that pleases call him a fool, he holds that dreams signify good or harm to many that dream at night secretly or that fall out openly afterwards.⁵³

That Chaucer took great interest in the problems connected with dreams is clear from his treatment of the subject, especially in the tales of *Troilus and Criseyde* and that of the *Nonne Preeste*. In the former he contrasts the two opinions, for and against the significance of dreams, making Pandarus the upholder of the sceptical view, while Troilus represents the superstitious man who believes in omens and dreams. In the second tale, Chauncleer may be taken for the superstitious man and Dame Pertelote for the unbeliever. Troilus was troubled in spirit by his love for Criseyde, but was on the other hand a great man of war, who on the Trojan side ranked in medieval thought as without any peer, save Hector, in his time. We are told how Troilus dreamed of dreadful things and groaned, or dreamed he was in some horrible place, making his moan, or fallen into the hands of his enemies, then starting awake in fear. So he sent for Pandarus, telling that he felt by his malady and by his dreams that he must surely die. Pandarus counsels him to drive away his dreams and suchlike phantasy, for they are caused by melancholy. A straw for all dreams' significance, no man knows aright what dreams mean. Priests of the temple say they are revealed by the gods, or, equally, by infernal illusion; leeches say they come of complexions, or fast, or gluttony; thus who knows in truth what they signify? Others say men dream according to the time of year and by the moon. Believe no dream; it is not to be done.

Later, Troilus lay down and slept, dreaming that he walked in a forest and there saw a boar and Criseyde by him. He told Pandarus: "I am but dead." He had for answer; dreams many a man beguile; thou canst no dreams rede. Pandarus suggested another interpretation; but Cassandra rightly explained that the boar represented Diomedes, and Troilus summed up the position:

The goddes shewen bothe joye and tene
In slepe, and by my dreme it is now sene.⁵⁴

In like manner the debate between Chauncleer and Pertelote ran its course. Chauncleer had his peace of mind sorely shaken by his dream of the fox, dan Russel. (Fear is often the result of dreams recorded in

⁵³ Ch., *H. of F.*, *op. cit.*, 1-65. *R. of R.*, W. W. Skeat, Ox. Clarendon Press, 1913, 1-20.

⁵⁴ Ch., *op. cit.*, *T. and C.*, v, 358 ff., 1233 ff., 1714-5.

the middle ages.) He described the beast that he had seen in his dream to his wife, adding that :

Yet of his look for fere almost I deye,
This caused me my groming doutelees.

In answer to his wife's appeal to Cato's—"somnia ne cures"—Chauntecleer upheld the belief that dreams have significance as well of joy as of tribulation and quoted dreams that have been followed by later events, naming those of St. Kenelm, Daniel, Joseph, Pharaoh, Cresus and Andromache. "Many a dream ful sor is for to drede."

Pertelote's argument was : Dreams are caused by repletion, vapours, temperament, choler, when humours are too abundant in a man ; take some herbs for your health, and

Be mery, housbond, for your fader kin !
Dredeth no dreem.⁵⁵

The difference between the two views may be summed up : Pandarus shows his attitude by crying "a straw for all dreams" and by his remarks on the varying explanations given by different classes of interpreters : Pertelote tries to persuade her husband to take medicinal remedies. But nothing brings about a change in the opinions of Troilus or Chauntecleer, and their belief is confirmed by the event in each case. The problem now as then is to decide what dreams we should heed and which we should neglect.

Chaucer is far from being the only writer of his period who gave attention to the question : Gower has much to say on the subject, specially in the section dealing with Sorcery and Witchcraft in the *Confessio Amantis* where he warns the lover through the mouth of the Confessor against these two methods of furthering the lover's interests. He gets a satisfactory answer from the lover, who disclaims the use of wrong methods ; none the less, the confessor tells two tales, that of Ulysses and Telegonus, and that of Nectanabus, to drive home his warning. In each is a tale of dreaming : the first is not very clearly connected with sorcery, though Gower ends the tale :

By sorcery his woe began and by sorcery his life he lost.

In the second tale the intention to use sorcery is very clear.⁵⁶

The religious writers of the period were also divided in their outlook on

⁵⁵ Ch., *op. cit.*, C. T. B, *N. Preestes Tale*, 4011 ff.

⁵⁶ G. C. A., *op. cit.*, vi, 1391 ff., 1789 ff.

dreams. In *Handlyng Synne* there is a reference to a temptation of the devil, if people pay overmuch attention to dreams. If after dreaming your daily business is not successful you are tempted to curse him of whom you dreamed. The writer follows this by advising his readers not to believe much in dreams. Clerks say that dreams are vanity, yet often you may find that what you have dreamed is followed by fulfilment ; only, too much reliance may lead to mischance. On the authority of St. Gregory we are told of six ways in which a man may dream ; some are to be believed, some disregarded. Some men dream through surfeit ; some through fasting dream idle dreams. Some dreams come through temptation of the devil ; some through overmuch thought of things that men would have done ; some are sent by God as warnings ; some result from great study. The two first kinds of dreams are due to our own fault, through excess of eating or drinking, or of fasting. The other four kinds are instanced in the Bible. The fiend tries to put to scorn those who trust overmuch to dreams. The wise clerk, Cato, said : Give no heed to dreams, they are but gleams that spring to mind at night when you sleep ; what you think, waking, appears before your eyes in a dream in sleep. Again, unless they come from God's privity, Joseph had taken no keep of what was showed in his sleep, that his father and mother and all his family should get honour. Also God's warning was given to St. Joseph, before his flight into Egypt from King Herod :

This is called revelation
To show before what is to be done.

Unless they come through study, Daniel had not known before of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.⁵⁷

Since there are so many kinds of dreams, there is doubt and great difficulty to know the cause of dreams ; some dream every night through custom ; so many dreams are vain that no man knows for certain except those who are in communion with God. To them is granted such things to see and they are not deceived by the devil. If you tell your dreams, that may be wrong ; if you believe, that is worse. In two passages in the book, we are told that without sight and thought you dream not ; and that, after clean shrift men dream less at night. A note in the *Vernon MS.* says : " Tell not waking what you have dreamed ; it is what you have coveted beforehand." ⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *H. S., op. cit.*, 339 ff., 7591-2, 11968.

⁵⁸ *H. S., op. cit.*, 461 ff. ; *Vernon MS., E.E.T.S., C. Horstmann, O. S.* 98 117 ; 1892-1901, I, 401-4.

We may compare William's opinion given in *Piers Plowman*; he had pondered his dream many times but had no taste for the interpreting of dreams, for he saw it fail often. Cato, he said, counsels to set no reliance on dreams: yet the Bible witnesses that Daniel divined the dreams of a king, and, as he divined, so it happened after: Joseph too dreamed wondrously and it befell as his father told.

Such was the medieval theory of dreams and the attitude of the church and the sober-minded people of the time. Examples from the chronicles and romances will help us to judge how much folklore—in story, legend and belief—the hearers and readers of these recorded tales retained in their memories. The stories of our period were drawn from many countries, several from Roman and Greek sources, and from Eastern lands; also from any current events, worthy of record, among the nations.

Death and burial supplied the theme for many a story. That of Cresus' dream was told by Chaucer in the *Monkes Tale*. The king dreamed that he was on a tree, washed by Jupiter and dried by Phoebus; his pride increased in consequence. But his daughter expounded to him the meaning of the dream. The tree signified the gallows, Jupiter betokened rain and Phoebus the streaming sun; this explanation was found true:

“Anhanged was Cresus the proude king.”

Chauncleer too uses this dream in support of his theory that some dreams—“I say not all”—held warnings of things that shall happen later.⁵⁹

Two accounts of the warning of Andromache of Hector's death are given; by Chaucer in the *Nonne Preestes Tale*, and in the *Destruction of Troy*. Chauncleer tells of Andromache:

“She warned him but it might not avail.”

The other account tells that Hector would be slain if he entered the battle next day. Priam was informed and forbade Hector to join in the battle; but Hector disobeying, was slain.⁶⁰

Gower borrows from classical sources the story of Ulysses' dream; he saw a man of heavenly beauty, who told him that one of the two should die by the hand of the other. Ulysses understood that Telemachus would kill him; but, in the event, Telegonus, another son, unwittingly killed him.

⁵⁹ *P. P.*, *op. cit.*, A, viii, 132 ff.; B, vii, 143 ff.; C, x, 297 ff.; Ch., *C. T. B.*, 3917 ff., 4328 ff.

⁶⁰ Ch., *op. cit.*, 4331 ff.; *D. o f T.*, *op. cit.*, 8421 ff.

Both Chaucer and Gower narrate the story of Alceone's dream ; Gower told how Alceone in a dream, saw the body of her husband Ceyx :

“ All naked dead upon the strand.”

She went to the sea-shore and found it as her dream showed, though her maids said that the dream was an omen of good. Another version of this tale is given by Chaucer in the *Book of the Duchess*.⁶¹

Other dreams and visions recorded in the Middle English period refer to death and burial. Such are those told in *Guy of Warwick* in which St. Michael told Guy to warn his wife of his approaching death ; such too, was the early warning to Beket, when he dreamed of his martyrdom long after. Death was foretold to St. Kenelm in a dream in which he was in a tree which was being felled : it was revealed in a vision to St. John the Evangelist when our Lord visited him to tell him of his death which would soon take place. In the legend of St. Cecilia her martyrdom was foreshown by token that she should die in this manner. In the story of *Amis and Amiloun*, Amiloun was warned of the leprosy that would overtake him if he should fight in an unrighteous quarrel ; and Amis learned from an angel that he was to kill his own children. This he did ; the children were saved by a miracle, and Amiloun healed of his leprosy. The Prior of Bixe (Bride ?) saw in his sleep a ladder reaching up to heaven with a monk upon it. When the Prior awoke, he called the brethren together and said that St. Dominic was dead ; on enquiry they found that he died at that time. King Arthur's dream on the eve of his battle with Mordred may also be mentioned here.⁶²

Some instances of dreams of dead saints appearing to ask for the collection and burial of their bones occur in the *Early South English Legendary*. St. John the Baptist and St. Sebastian asked thus for burial ; St. Vincent, too, for “ him longued after rest ” ; so did St. Bartholomew, while St. Edward asked that his body should be removed to Shaftesbury. Other dreams were told by Chaunticleer in Chaucer's tale of the *Nonne Preeste*, of the two cases of two travellers, and of the dream of Pharaoh's baker, expounded by Joseph.⁶³

There are also records of dreams and visions granted to dreamers as warnings of the dangers of others ; thus on two occasions in *Beues of*

⁶¹ G. C. A., *op. cit.*, vi, 1391 ff. ; iv, 2927 ff. ; Ch., *op. cit.*, M. P., iii, 62 ff.

⁶² G. of W., *op. cit.*, *Auch.*, 284-1 ff. ; E. S. E. L., *op. cit.*, xxvii, 1541 ff. ; xlix, 215 ff. ; lx, 448 ff. ; lxxiv. A. and A., H. v. Weber *Anc. Met. Rom.*, 1810-1250 ff., 2188 ff. E. S. E. L., *op. cit.*, xli, 326 ff. L. B., 28014 ff.

⁶³ E. S. E. L., *op. cit.*, xiv, 101 ff. ; xxviii, 83 ff. ; xxx, 167 ff. ; lv, 114 ff. ; 298 ff. ; xvii, 187 ff. Ch., C. T. B., 4320 ff.

Hamtoun Saber of Southampton dreamed of Beues being in difficulty or danger ; in *Guy of Warwick* Herhaud dreamed of Guy being attacked and rode at once to his help. Other dreams brought other messages to dreamers. Gower records the dream of the " Sarazin " in the Midianite camp and of Gideon's successful raid on the enemy host ; king Athelston, in *Guy of Warwick*, was directed to ask of Guy, who was in pilgrim dress, his help to fight against the Danish champion ; in *Chevelere Assigne* we read how the hermit was enabled, through the vision of an angel to regain for the six children, who had been turned into swans by sorcery, their human shape. The *Early South English Legendary* mentions other cases of dreams in the lives of Saints Nicholas, Francis and Dominic.⁶⁴

Many dreams caused great fear ; we read how Bevis dreamed that he was beset by several kings and leapt to horse as if " he were mad " on wakening : the future Queen of *Tars* was much disturbed by a dream though afterwards her fear was allayed : it is told in *William of Palerne* how Melior had a dream which frightened her ; she thought that she and William in the bearskins which they had put on as disguises were beset by wild animals. When they were being attacked, the werwolf rescued them by drawing the attention of the pursuers to the provost's son whom he seized ; he was followed by the party, leaving William and Melior to escape. Later in the story, Melior had a second dream which caused her fear, which William interpreted in a good sense. The vision of Belshazzar and the terror it caused to the king are described in *Clannesse*.⁶⁵

In other dreams journeys and other tasks were enjoined. Arcite dreamed that Mercury bade him go to Athens, and he obeyed the command. It is recorded in Lazamon's *Brut* that Brutus and Cadwalader undertook journeys in consequence of dreams. When the Emperor Constantine had pity on the mothers assembled to give their children's blood to heal his leprosy, Gower tells that God sent two saints, Peter and Paul, bidding him to send to Silvester that he might receive baptism. Constantine obeyed and was healed of his disease. The *Early South English Legendary* tells of St. Katherine and of St. Agathe ; the former was healed of her wound when an angel anointed it, and the latter was cured by a man who told her that he was sent by God for the purpose. The legends of St. Lucie and of St. Cuthbert also contain accounts of

⁶⁴ *B. of H.*, *op. cit.*, 3841 ff., 4041 ff. *G. of W.*, *op. cit.*, 4017 ff. *G. C. A.*, *op. cit.*, vii, 3705 ff. *G. of W.*, *op. cit.*, *Caius* 10434 ff. ; *Chev. Ass.*, E.E.T.S., *Ex S.*, vi, 145 ff., 191 ff. *E. S. E. L.*, *op. cit.*, xxxvii, 73 ff. ; xviii, 184 ff. ; xli, 5 ff.

⁶⁵ *B. of H.*, *op. cit.*, A, 1701 ff. ; *K. of Tars*, J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, 1802, 397 ff. ; *W. of P.*, E.E.T.S., *Ex S.*, i, W. W. Skeat, 2292 ff., 3103 ff. ; *Clan.*, E.E.T.S., *E. E. Allit. Poems*, R. Morris, 1530 ff.

healing after visions. St. Nicholas entered the Emperor's palace in spite of all the bars and told him to release three princes, held in prison on a false accusation.⁶⁶

Dreams and visions as they occur in real life present a great variety of circumstance, and the records in the manuscripts of our period show an equal diversity. St. Dunstan had a vision of the angels of heaven which was recorded in the *Chronicle of England*: St. Francis in two visions saw a noble palace in one and a great tree which bowed towards him in another: to Damoysele Ourse an angel came in a vision, warning her to lead her company of the eleven thousand virgins to their martyrdom: a white dove appeared to Edmund the Confessor: other visions are told in the *Early South English Legendary* in the sections allotted to St. Martyn, All Saints and All Souls: St. Leonard and St. Thomas; and the list could be prolonged by quotations from *Joseph of Arimathie*, from *Barlaam and Josaphat*; from *Marie Maudelein*.⁶⁷

Adam Davy's Five Dreams deserve mention for their references to King Edward II; the gleams of colour in the first of these remind us of the lights, token of kingship, in the story of Havelok, though those of the five dreams are coloured; details of clothing are given in some of the dreams told by Adam Davy.⁶⁸

A few words should also be given to two dreams told in *King Horn*; to the dream of Criseyde which Chaucer tells; and to those of King Arthur. *King Horn* tells how Riminhild dreamed that she was fishing with a net that broke, and, later in the story how the King dreamed that Riminhild was wrecked at sea. Chaucer relates that Criseyde slept and dreamed that an eagle tore out her heart with his long claws and placed in its place his heart, without her feeling pain.⁶⁹

The *Alliterative Morte Arthure* has a passage describing how the King had a dreadful dream, first of lions licking the blood of his knights and then of the Wheel of Fortune; he was lifted to a seat on the wheel and then thrown from it.⁷⁰

Another dream of King Arthur, that of the Dragon and the Bear

⁶⁶ Chaucer, *C. T. A.*, 1380 ff.; *L. B.*, *op. cit.*, 1221 ff., 32063-4 ff.; *G. C. A.*, *op. cit.*, ii, 3187 ff.; *E. S. E. L.*, *op. cit.*, xxv, 183-4; xxxiii, 69 ff.; xxvi, 44; li, 39 ff.; xxxvii, 247 ff.

⁶⁷ *Chron. of England*, J. Ritson, *op. cit.*, 702; *E. S. E. L.*, *op. cit.*, xviii, 12 ff., 184 ff.; xxiv, 75 ff.; lxiii, 268 ff.; lxiv, 168 ff.; lxi, 49 ff.; lxii, 3 ff.; lxv, 113 ff.; lvi, 199 ff. *J. of A.*, E.E.T.S., O. S. 44, W. W. Skeat, 1871, 181 ff. *M. M.*, J. B. D. D. Turnbull, pp. 223-5.

⁶⁸ *A. D. 5 D.*, E.E.T.S., O. S. 69, F. J. Furnivall, 1878, 7 ff.

⁶⁹ *K. H.*, E.E.T.S., O. S. 14, J. R. Lumby, 1866, 657 ff., 1407 ff. Chaucer, *op. cit.*, *T. and C.*, ii, 925 ff.

⁷⁰ E.E.T.S., O. S. 8, E. Brock, 1865, 3224 ff.

throws light upon the risks attending an evil exposition. The King dreamed as he slept, and as he woke he was in great fear and groaned loudly. He was asked to tell his dream : "Willingly," he said, "may it turn to bliss ; the two beasts met with fiendly assaults, and the dragon at last overcame the bear." Bishops, book-learned men, earls and barons heard this. They spoke and interpreted. No knight would expound it in an evil way, for fear he should lose his limbs, which were dear to him. Severe indeed was the penalty for an evil suggestion.⁷¹

The dream on the eve of the battle with Modred is well known. Arthur said : "Tonight in my sleep I dreamed a dream ; therefore am I full sorry. I dreamed that men heaved me on to a hall which I bestrode as if riding. I overlooked all the land I own, and Gawayne sat before me, bearing my sword. Then came Modred with countless folk : he bare in his hand a strong axe and began to hew the posts that upheld the hall. The hall began to totter and I fell to the ground, that my right arm broke. Then said Modred : 'Take that.' Down fell the hall, both his arms broke, and I gripped my dear sword in my left hand and smote off Modred's head that it went on the field. . . . All my folk started to flee, that I knew not where they were become. But I myself went to stand upon a wold, and there I wandered wide on that moor. There saw I griffons and grisly fowls. Then came a golden lion over the down, . . . and running to me it grasped me by the middle and went forth to the sea, and I saw the waves driving in the sea and the lion went in the flood with me alone. Then I saw come a lithe fish and brought me to land. Then was I all weary and sorry and sick. Then I began to awake and to quake. . . . I know surely that all my bliss is gone. . . ." At the battle Arthur cried : "Now I have lost my people's love : I knew by my dream what sorrow was given me."⁷²

In two poems dreams of the future possession of a kingdom are told. That of Huelok has been mentioned ; the second is in *William of Palerne*. The Queen of Spain was besieged in her city by the King of Spain. Weary and in great care she went to her bed and dreamed of two harts with crowns of gold on their heads ; and then thought that her right arm reached over Rome and her left over Spain. She told her dream to the priest ; he took his books and expounded it for good. In the event the dream was fulfilled.⁷³

A dream which came true and presents some features of early folklore

⁷¹ *L. B., op. cit.*, 25551 ff.

⁷² *L. B., op. cit.*, 28014 ff.

⁷³ *W. of P., op. cit.*, 2868 ff., 2906 ff., 5496 ff.

is told in *Guy of Warwick*. It is that of Tirri. Guy in pilgrim garb was unrecognized by Tirri, who fell asleep on Guy's lap. When Sir Tirri was fallen asleep, Guy beheld him and began to weep and to make great mourning. Then Guy saw a creature like an ermine, as swift as wind that bloweth on cloud, as white as lily on lake. This ran from Tirri's mouth without delay to a hill, to glide in a hole in a rock. It dwelt there not long (the Caius MS. has "but came again the same day"). It entered into Tirri's mouth and Tirri began to awake. Guy wondered at that sight. Tirri sat up and looked at Guy and said: "Sir Pilgrim, a wonderful dream I have just dreamed; I thought that I was gone to that hill that you can see. In at a hole I went and I found such treasure that none like it is in all this world." (Caius MS.: "Full it was of red gold.") Beside that treasure lay a dead dragon and on it lay a brown sword, the sheath carved comely. In the hilt was many a precious stone; it shone as bright as any sun. I thought Guy sat at my head, and held me in his lap, as thou dost before me. If it were so, well were it for me that ever I was born. (Caius MS. has: "Methought Sir Guy, my dear fellow, was by me,—then was all my sorrow away.") Then said Sir Guy: "Now, fellow, that dream will turn great joy to thee; well I shall interpret it. Through Guy thou shalt recover thy land. . . . Let us take the way to the hill, where it seemed to thee the treasure lay, and thou shalt lead me in. Would that we might find that treasure; it would help us in our need." Tirri assented and the two knights rose and went to the hill and entered. They found the treasure, the dragon and the sword. Sir Guy drew out the sword, all the polished surface of it shone as it were lightning. Guy cried: "Never before saw I such a brand. I wot it came from heaven." The hilt was graven with gold, the pommel was of carbuncle. (Caius MS.: "It was made in far land.") Into the scabbard he did it again, and said to Tirri, "I take no keep of all the treasure, but of the brand of steel." Some points in this story are noteworthy; first, that Tirri in his dream recognized Guy through his pilgrim weeds; then that Guy's interpretation seems to go further than the dream warranted and that the knightly joy in seeing a fine weapon was more appropriate to Guy the knight than to Guy the pilgrim. The folklore details of the tale are well known: when a sleeper dreams, the soul leaves the body, and may take, as in the romance, a bodily form. Care should be taken not to move the body during the dream; otherwise the spirit might lose its way and be unable to return to the sleeper's body. Then the body, left without a spirit, would die. In this instance, all went well, and a happy end, on the lines told by Guy in his undoing of the dream, followed.

We may compare the lines in Pearl :

Thence, from that spot, my spirit sprang ;
my body lay in trance on mound ;
my soul, by grace of God, had fared
adventuring, where marvels be.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ *Guy of W.*, 162-1 to 167-9 ; *Pearl*, Sir I. Gollancz, Chatto & Windus, London, 1921 (modern rendering by Sir I. G.).